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Summary record of the 16th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 31 October 2005 at 11 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Muhith (Vice-Chairman)..... (Bangladesh)
*Acting Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Saha

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In the absence of Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Mr. Muhiith (Bangladesh), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Agenda item 124: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/60/L.12: Holocaust remembrance (A/60/7/Add.6 and A/60/526; A/60/L.12)

1. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Officer-in-Charge of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) introduced the Secretary-General's statement, contained in document A/60/526, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/60/L.12, entitled "Holocaust remembrance". Under paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary General to establish a programme of outreach on the subject of the "Holocaust and the United Nations", as well as measures to mobilize civil society for Holocaust remembrance and education, in order to help prevent future acts of genocide. The Secretary-General would also be requested to report to the General Assembly on the establishment of the programme within six months from the date of the adoption of the draft resolution and to report on the implementation of the programme at the Assembly's sixty-third session.

2. Parts II and III of the Secretary-General's statement outlined the relationship of the requested activities to the programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007, indicating that they fell under section 27, Public information. The outreach programme would be established in the Department of Public Information, and an annual two-day seminar on the lessons of the Holocaust would be held in New York. Estimated additional resources of \$345,200 would be required under that budget section, as detailed in part IV of the statement. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/213, a contingency fund was established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the approved or proposed programme budget. As outlined in part VI of the Secretary-General's statement, if the General Assembly adopted the draft resolution, the additional resources would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

3. **Mr. Maycock** (Advisory Committee Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on programme budget implications of the draft resolution (A/60/7/Add.6), said that he wished to point out the extraordinary nature of the proceedings. Recalling the Advisory Committee had received the Secretary-General's statement only two hours previously, he noted that such a method of proceeding called into question the validity of procedures for the consideration of administrative and budgetary matters, and trusted that such a method would be avoided in the future.

4. The Secretary-General had proposed an amount of \$172.8 million under section 27 for the 2006-2007 budget. Under the current proposal, the Department of Public Information would have a total regular budget establishment of 747 posts, including 162 P-4 posts and 231 General Service posts. According to information received by the Advisory Committee, the Department would also have available to it over \$5 million in general temporary assistance, not including nearly \$1 million for overtime and personal services contracts.

5. The Advisory Committee had consistently cautioned against the Secretariat's inclination to request additional resources for each and every new activity instead of maximizing the existing potential. It believed that the envisaged activities could be carried out without the need to request additional resources. The Fifth Committee should therefore report to the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.12, there would be no need for an additional appropriation at the current time. Should any such requirement materialize, it could be reported in the first performance report on the programme budget for 2006-2007.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

6. **The Chairman** said it was his understanding that the Committee had reached agreement concerning programme budget implications of draft resolution A/60/L.12, and requested the Secretary to read out the text of the Committee's draft decision.

7. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the text of the Committee's draft decision:

"The Fifth Committee, having considered the statement of programme budget implications

submitted by the Secretary-General (A/60/526) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/60/7/Add.6), wishes to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/60/L.12, additional resources in the amount of \$345,200 would be required under section 27, Public information. This would be charged against the contingency fund and, as such, would require appropriation for the biennium 2006-2007. In this context, the Fifth Committee requests the Secretary-General to report on the actual expenditures incurred for this activity under section 27, Public information, in the context of his second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007."

8. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft decision.

9. *It was so decided.*

10. **Mr. Longhurst** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said it was important that the activities set forth in draft resolution A/60/L.12 should be properly implemented and financed. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, the European Union fully agreed with the comments of the Advisory Committee concerning the extraordinary nature of the proceedings, but had decided to support the draft decision in the interests of consensus and a speedy settlement of the issue. However, the Department of Public Information should continue to seek ways to reprioritize its activities, and the European Union would revisit the issue in the context of the Committee's discussions on section 27 of the proposed programme budget.

11. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation also fully agreed with the comments of the Advisory Committee, and supported its findings and recommendations. However, it had joined the consensus on the draft decision so that the General Assembly could take prompt action on the matter. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, the United States was convinced of the need to implement the requested activities, but expected that the Department of Public Information would do so as efficiently and effectively as possible. It also understood that the contingency fund would be discussed further in the context of the negotiations on the proposed budget.

12. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that her delegation also wished to draw attention to the comments of the Advisory Committee on the procedure whereby the issue had been brought before the Committee, and urged that every effort should be made to avoid a recurrence of the situation. However, her delegation did not agree with the Advisory Committee's comment regarding the Secretariat's inclination to request additional resources for each new activity, and was very surprised at that approach. Departments requested resources because their activities had been approved, and the Committee could not, therefore, simply state that there was enough money available.

13. **Mr. Mazumdar** (India), noting that his delegation supported the draft resolution, said that the premise that newer mandates should be financed through the displacement of earlier mandates was not acceptable, as pointed out by the representative of Jamaica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Furthermore, the premise that the budget level of the Department for Public Information was such that it could absorb newer mandates was unacceptable. That Department's budget had been consistently pared down, and the issue should be revisited — and the Department's budget increased — within the context of the Committee's budget negotiations.

14. **Mr. Torres Lépori** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that his delegation fully supported the draft resolution but was concerned at the hurried manner in which the programme budget implications had been presented to the Committee. Moreover, that proceeding ran counter to the Committee's traditional practice of analysing all programme budget implications together.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.